



Help For Food Product Entrepreneurs Available At UK

By Janet Eaton, Ag. Communications Intern

"Sometimes it is an awful lot of red tape and sometimes you wonder if it is worth it, but when you see it at the end and you see it has made an impact on somebody else's life you know it is a good thing to do"

*Benjy Mikel
UK Extension Animal
Meat Specialist*

LEXINGTON, Ky. (Feb. 19, 2003) - Kentucky entrepreneurs with a food product idea can now snip through some of the red tape involved in bringing their product to customers.

Expert help is available every step of the way thanks to the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture's value-added food processing incubator.

Traditionally thought of as a mechanical device, "incubator" also means an environment promoting the development of ideas. The UK program is entrepreneur-driven and brings expertise and practical help within reach of small entrepreneurs.

"Basically the incubator is a vehicle for us to help any kind of entrepreneur or anyone wanting to put a food product out," said Benjy Mikel, UK Extension animal meat specialist. "We help them enhance their idea by working with them to come up with the right packaging, the right marketing scheme and a cost analysis while making sure we cover all the regulations, too."

The program is centered on the UK campus where facilities for product testing and making test batches are available. Product taste testing is conducted as part of the process. All these services are very affordable.

The incubator started with \$150,000 from UK and has since received a \$75,000 grant from the Kentucky innovation act of 2000. Further support has come from former clients and the food industry. As a result, all services are free and clients only pay for raw materials.

An added bonus for the College is the program

uses students in all phases of the process. The work teaches them creativity and allows the program to reach more people.

“We love to use students because it gives us the opportunity to do more than we would normally have the opportunity to do without them,” Mikel said. “It exposes them to a wide variety of projects and how to help our Kentucky farmers add value to their products.”

Bringing an entrepreneur’s dream into reality can take time and expertise, but Mikel sees bringing the lone producer to a more advantageous market as part of his role in Extension work.

“Sometimes it is an awful lot of red tape and sometimes you wonder if it is worth it, but when you see it at the end and you see it has made an impact on somebody else’s life you know it is a good thing to do,” Mikel said.

Writer: [Janet Eaton](#) 859-257-4736, ext. 267

Source: [Benjy Mikel](#) 859-257-7550

Return to [Main News](#) page.